

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

June 5, 2001

7:00 PM

In the absence of Mayor Baines, Chairman Cashin called the meeting to order.

Chairman Cashin called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Shea.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Levasseur, Sysyn, Clancy, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez, Shea, Vaillancourt, Pariseau, Cashin, Thibault, and Hirschmann

Chairman Cashin advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Chairman Cashin requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Bobbi Fox, 196 N. River Road, Manchester stated:

I am here on behalf of the NH National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Law to invite you to attend the appearance and celebration of the Hemp Car here in Manchester on July 13 in Veteran's Park for which a permit has been obtained. The Hemp Car, a 1983 Mercedes Benz wagon powered by bio-diesel fuel will be making a landmark trip cross country and into Canada beginning July 4 in Washington, DC and will be here in Manchester at Veteran's Park on July 13 around noon. We also have events scheduled in Concord, Nashua and Keene where the Governor, State Legislature, City Mayors and officials are all invited. The event at Veteran's Park will feature entertainment, local vendors and various speakers, as well as informational booths. Industrial hemp has no psychoactive properties and is not a drug. Bio-diesel technology has been around since 1895 when Dr. Rudolph Diesel developed the first diesel engine to run on vegetable oil and demonstrated his engine at the World's Fair in 1900. Bio-diesel is the only alternative fuel that can be used directly in any existing unmodified diesel engine.

Because it has similar properties to petroleum diesel fuel, bio-diesel can be blended into any ratio with petroleum based diesel fuel, however, it is non-toxic and biodegradable. Many federal and state fleet vehicles are already using bio-diesel blends in their existing diesel engines. The use of bio-diesel fuel produces approximately 80% less carbon dioxide emissions and almost 100% less sulfur dioxide than petroleum based fuel. This is a very important factor when you consider the effects of ground water contamination that has become a major concern with MTBE additive to petroleum fuels and is currently under legislation in this state to be banned. Bio-diesel fuel can also extend the life of engines because it is 11% oxygen by weight and, therefore, more lubricating than petroleum diesel fuel. Bio-diesel can be domestically produced with renewable oil seed crops such as hemp. With the cost of petroleum fuels expected to rise well over \$2 a gallon this summer, isn't it time to investigate other fuels? We would also ask that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen draft a welcome letter, pass a resolution of endorsement or give the key to the city as a symbol of their support of the environment. Please make an effort to come and see the Hemp Car for yourself and find out the facts surrounding industrial hemp, and alternative fuels. We look forward to seeing you at Veteran's Park on July 13.

Lloyd Basinow, 503 Amherst Street, Manchester stated:

I am going to briefly talk about the poor management of our Welfare Department. This year the Manchester Welfare departmental budget will exceed \$1.5 million and increase each year thereafter unless the operating expenses are brought under full control. Examination of the finances of this City agency has revealed that less than 60% of its budget is used for direct public assistance and over 40% is overhead and payroll. In other words, it cost the taxpayers over \$600,000 annually to give away another \$900,000 with no revenue help from either the state or federal government. For every \$1.50 given to the needy by Manchester taxpayers, it costs those same taxpayers another \$1 in overhead, non-refundable expense to support the system. This public agency should be a lifeline umbrella tying together all of the local social services, including all public and privately funded agencies but it does not do this job. Our Welfare Department should be at the head of this network helping our citizens to return fully to being productive, self-sufficient members of our community but this City department lacks proper leadership. With a bloated, mismanaged and misdirected budget, this City department continues to stumble along from year to year without improvement and without relief to our taxpayers. On tonight's agenda is the first of a number of proposals coming down the pike to make this City agency efficient, effective and cost-effective. It is only a name change but it represents an initial starting point in the correct direction and towards the necessary goal. I hope the Board will act favorably in considering my proposal to change the Department of Welfare into the Office of Community Assistance.

Chris Herbert, 20 Old Wellington Road, Manchester stated:

The reason I am here tonight is because I would like to point out some things in reference to the budget that is currently before you and I have a number of concerns. As you know, I am Chairman of the Building and Sites Committee and frankly, gentlemen, in the current budget that you are considering for passage there are some holes that I am not sure you are aware of. For example, one of the initiatives we wanted to take was to add some employees to take care of cosmetic changes such as painting, fixing bathroom plumbing, ceiling tiles and the kinds of things that have created a lot of irritation in the public, especially at Central High School. There was \$180,000 in our budget for that and I think it disappeared. We have a \$250,000 architectural plan to come forward to you next year for the renovation and modernization of our three high schools, which is likely to be somewhere in the area of an \$18 million project. That \$250,000 has disappeared. It is not in our budget. We also had additional monies in our budget to pay for our share of increased cleaning with the ServiceMaster contract and that is not in our budget. All of these things have disappeared. The reason being they had to be cut in order to get down to the \$114 million. If we cut out all of the positions that we were going to add, including our special education, our clerical workers, our seven new regular teachers for enrollment growth, we can only save about \$2.1 million. That leaves us over \$2 million short in order to get down to the Mayor's proposal. Now I understand you are putting \$1 million from CIP into our operating budget but that is not new money folks. This was basically shuffled paper but the same list of CIP projects is still there. This is maintenance. If we have to go into that CIP budget in order to fund the architectural studies or the maintenance workers, we are back to what we have been doing for the past 10 years and that is not adequately funding building maintenance. As somebody who has looked at a lot of these things and tried to get the initiatives going and tried to keep them affordable, it is very disappointing to come in at this late stage of the game and realize that once again I am facing not being able to do the minimum that we need in order to maintain our buildings and try and keep them clean. By the way, we have \$300,000 for space needs at Central, which is now translating directly into portables. So we have a number of negative events that we are going to be looking at next September and I am really frustrated that I may also not be able to keep Central clean and I may not be able to keep it repaired. I was hoping to at least be able to do that for the parents and the students at Central. Unless somebody can identify specifically in this budget where that money is without taking it out of CIP because that just means you are not doing maintenance, I would appreciate it but right now I am of the opinion that this budget is at least \$500,000 to \$750,000 short for maintenance alone.

Felix M. Torres, 44 Penacook Street, Manchester stated:

I am here representing Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services at 968 Elm Street. Recently we delivered a letter, which we hope that the Aldermen and the Mayor got regarding the parking at the civic center and behind it was a petition. The petition really

was to represent that people in the neighborhood are prepared to be part of a solution and to make a difference on the parking issue. Since we passed the petition we understand that the Traffic Committee has changed ordinance at the behest and leadership of Alderman Levasseur. We think this is a great first step. We think...had we known that before we did the petition, the petition would be slightly different. The ordinances before you are a great first step. We want you to and hope that in the future you will consider two further steps. Number one is visitor parking. We want the neighborhood to remain and the residents want it to remain a neighborhood where their friends and relatives can visit them. Second, we think that the current protection which runs roughly to Union Street should be further extended eastward in the future. We think that those two things would be part of a comprehensive approach and will finalize a solution to that problem. I would like to say when we went out and got signatures the only people who didn't sign our petition were people who did not speak English as their first language. To finish up we want to invite you all to our open house on Thursday from 2 PM to 6 PM and the Mayor will be there giving a proclamation at 4 PM.

Tracy Degges, 153 Cedar Street, Manchester stated:

I am here to ask the Board to rethink their decision on parking in the Center City. We as the residents agree with the resident stickers but we don't understand why our family and friends were not included in the parking plan. We were told that it would be too much trouble to give stickers out to all of the streets. The problem does not effect the whole city, only the center city. I was told that there is not a cost-effective way to handle this problem. We as residents feel that we have been misled. As Board members you can have anyone visit you without being told they can't park in front of your house. Why do we not have the same rights as others in this City? Why must we ask our family to park elsewhere? When the City built the civic center, we residents were promised that it would not change our neighborhoods. Well I guess promises were made to be broken. The center city residents work hard to make it safe for our families. If you go forward with a plan that does not eventually include visitor parking, the residents of the Center City will feel as if the City does not care enough about our families and protecting our streets.

Harold Levine, 49 Hillcroft Road, Manchester stated:

I spoke last month to this Board and I never received any answers to any of my questions regarding how the civic center committee could take taxpayer money and supply heat so that contractors employees could work. I said it was wrong last month and I still say it is wrong today and I would like to know how much it actually cost the taxpayers of Manchester for that little thing. Another thing I was very annoyed about was lately if you watch MCTV all you see is people running for office, whether they are Aldermen or running for Mayor, etc. I don't think the taxpayers should be footing the bill for their freebies and they are only promoting their agenda and not an agenda of the taxpayers. I was reading this morning's *Union Leader* as usual and see that our tax rates are going up

93 cents per \$1,000. Well it sounds low but you ladies and gentlemen of this Board, after watching last night's meeting there is no way for the last 10 years you have ever tried to do anything for the taxpayers. I have mentioned saving money as far as consolidation of garages and the motor pool. We would save so much money. Another thing is you have done nothing about the bloated departments, especially the City Solicitor's Office and the Finance Department. I also have to put in the MTA. You had a gentleman here a couple of weeks who presented a so-called budget and asked for another \$100,000 but you people knew nothing about it so you gave him \$30,000. People like this in private industry would be fired if they didn't prepare themselves and it seems as though the taxpayers in Manchester still have a deep pocketbook to run the City because of the people who are employed by the City.

Susan Klein, 999 Chestnut Street, Manchester stated:

I am here regarding the school budget. I have spent a lot of time this year observing the process by which the City manages and provides for its schools and I have been deeply disappointed. The adversarial relationship between the School Board and the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen has served to blow smoke over the critical issues of the day. The overcrowding, neglective maintenance, outdated curriculum and underfunding of our schools has been minimized and obscured. The concerns of the parents, students and citizens of this City have been largely ignored. Sarcasm and anger have characterized much of the interchange between the two Boards and among the Board members and much of this has played out in the newspapers. Power struggles and posturing have pervaded your interactions and it seems to me that some members of this Board have been more concerned about their political progress than about the daily lives of our student population. To those of you who have expressed true concern for the students over and above this petty bickering, I thank you. Mayor Baines has inherited a school system in shameful condition and has reaped the harvest of many years of neglect, but I think it is important to remember that a great deal of this neglect occurred when the City did control the schools and when this Board had line item control of the school budget yet a great deal of time and energy is now being expended by this Board to retain control of the School Board. You can continue your adversarial relationship with the School Board and struggle with them for power or you can spend more time looking at the demographics of the student population of this City and come to an understanding of why the school budget has to grow. Special needs, ESL, federal mandates and rapid population growth have all contributed to a growing budget. Wages and the cost of benefits have risen. The school budget is going to rise and it has to rise more than many other operations in the City. I am asking this Board to work together with the School Board to address the needs of our students. With the additional state funding the City is receiving we have the means to address the urgent problems in our schools. We only need the will to do so and the teamwork to make it happen. Thank you.

Kathryn Staub, 374 Laurel Street, Manchester stated:

I am the President of the Manchester Coalition for Quality Education. We are a group of parents who are concerned about the condition of our schools. I happened to be here on Thursday night for the school budget presentation and I came away with a sense that when you looked at next year's school budget you saw only numbers. Because very few of you have had any recent contact with the Manchester public schools it is difficult for you to understand the impact of these numbers on our schools and on our children. Some of you have had no experience with the Manchester public schools as a parent or as a student. I am what you would call an involved parent. I am in the school every single day and as PTA President I work closely with our principal and have a good understanding of the challenges that she faces every day in educating our children. Last Thursday when I came I was with a new Manchester parent and she came away with the same idea that I did, that it would be difficult for you to understand what the budget truly means by sitting in this Chamber and staring at pieces of paper. She thinks that each of you should spend the day in the Manchester public schools as a student. The Mayor wants to make you all principals, but I think that would be boring. I think it would be more fun to be students. You could eat your lunch on a wobbly, crooked cafeteria school. You could have speech therapy in a closet. You could spend half an hour shelving 30 year old reference books in the Library and you could be the last to use a photocopy instead of a real textbook and spend some time in special education class and then you wouldn't have to ask what the money is for because you would know firsthand and be able to decide if the request is valid based on personal knowledge and understanding. I would like to see next year's school budget fully funded. We are receiving a \$42 million adequacy grant from the state and that is the biggest one we have ever gotten and we have an expanded tax base and even though no one has any confidence in that \$5.2 billion figure, I think that it would be possible to fully fund the school budget with a negligible impact based on the 25% increase in valuation, which is what you predict for the average taxpayer. This is a great opportunity. The other reason I would like you to fully fund the budget is because if it is fully funded then I would expect to see some improvement and I know that one year of a fully funded budget won't solve all of the problems that we have but like I said I am there every single day and if I don't start seeing new reference books on those shelves and if my daughter comes home and says I can't have Science homework because they don't have enough textbooks then I am going to want to know why and I am going to hold everybody accountable for it. I am going to hold the School District Administration and the School Board accountable. I will say I worked really hard to see that you got that money and I want to know why it is not being used the way you said it would be used. Finally, I know that some of you feel that the schools can probably get by on less money but you know what we are tired of sending our children to schools that are just getting by. We want good schools that are worthy of our children and of our community. Thank you.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

First of all I would like to thank the Mayor's Office for answering my inquiries from last month on the civic center. According to this and when I went back and read the documents, the City is responsible 100% for the repayment of all of the bonds and the private loans. The private loans are being paid out of revenue from the civic center. That revenue should be profit to the City. One of the other things is I have been pouring through this 64 page document on the cable franchise contract renewal and nowhere in that 64 pages can I find any mention to interest due the City. We pay our cable bills and the franchise fee, which is really a tax, they collect that money and every quarter they send a payment to the City but they are keeping that money and there is no interest coming to us and that adds up to just slightly over \$1 million a year in payments and franchise fees that we are receiving no interest on. It seems to be that same argument that is going on between the School Board and this Board about interest payments. I think they are going to win their argument. Someone should look into this in 10 years when they go to renew it again. The other thing is the educational money coming back from Concord. There was a nice article in the paper a couple of weeks ago where Randy Sherman from the Finance Department said we missed a tremendous opportunity to set money aside for school expansion. Nashua was very progressive. They set aside \$18 million to pay for school expansion. They are going to be using the interest off of that. I advocated that same idea a couple of years ago to set some money aside and make it work for us but we didn't do it. The other thing is sidewalk repaving. There was a nice article in the paper here where a gentleman on the West Side got into that 50/50 program and it cost him \$3,400 for his share and he said if he had to do it over again he wouldn't do it. Other people are getting sidewalks at no charge. I would hope that this Aldermanic Board would talk to the Planning Board and when any new subdivisions go in that sidewalks would be a part of the project. Out in Ward 6 you are going to deal with some sidewalks out there. The other thing is talk to your construction crew. Take a ride down Huse Road. They just did the sidewalk over and did an excellent job but they put the mailboxes right in the center of the sidewalk. Somebody in a wheelchair is going to have a hard time getting through there. Lastly to go along with Alderman Wihby's idea, keep up the pressure on the School Board and keep them in the Administration building where they are now and don't let them move.

Tom Friedman, 53 Lancelot Avenue, Manchester stated:

I would like to respectfully bring before you a problem that has developed pertaining to the downtown handicapped parking situation. It is my understanding that the parking meters on most of Elm Street have been designated with blue stickers stating three hour handicapped parking. Although this makes perfect sense for the purpose it was intended, it does create a compounding problem for handicapped persons who operate a business for eight hours a day, five or six days a week. For them to park at a remote site is inconsequential. The problem, however, is getting back to their business establishment and then back to their vehicle. Handicapped disability is not a part-time condition in

most instances, although that may be debatable. My mother and I have operated a retail store between Myrtle and Orange Street for 22 years. In my case I had bypass surgery in 1979 at the age of 31 and I suffer from diabetes. My mother is in her mid-70's and also has heart conditions and she has a difficult time walking. I display a valid blue placard on the mirror when I park my vehicle. To deny any legitimate handicapped person displaying a valid handicapped plate or placard is in itself a crime. As a community it is our responsibility to be sensitive to the needs of the sick and the old for I believe that this is how a community is judged for its greatness. After all, tomorrow it could be you or your loved one. Thank you for affording me the courtesy and time to talk before you on this important issue.

Rona Zlockower, 161 North Adams Street, Manchester stated:

I am here tonight on behalf of citizens and residents throughout the City and all wards who are members of the Manchester Coalition for Quality Education. Tonight we present you with over 550 signatures on a petition. This is the first in a series of offerings of signatures on this petition. We the undersigned parents and residents demand that our elected City officials take immediate action to address the deteriorating conditions of the Manchester public school system. We support a capital improvement plan that addresses the need for immediate and long-term school facilities improvement. We also support an annual operating budget that meets the needs of all of our students, attracts and retains excellent teachers and addresses the urgent need for improvement in our curriculum, resources, class sizes and environment. We will hold you accountable for providing a plan for the above mentioned actions. We are presenting this to you tonight. We are also presenting the same over 550 signatures to the School Board at their next meeting and at subsequent meetings we will keep adding on to our petition. We know that there are thousands of people who we represent who haven't even had a chance to sign the petition yet. Each day additional people sign on. We are sure that it represents thousands and we are sure that citizens are grateful to us because when they signed our petitions they said thank you very much for doing this. We are tired of waiting year after year, budget session after budget session and election after election. As many of the signers of the petition know, you have only to walk into our schools and listen to our teachers, administrators and students and look around you to know what needs to be done. Further, a number of studies, which you have all read, paid for by taxpayer dollars clearly document the improvements that need to be made. We really can't wait any longer. The Manchester Coalition for Quality Education informs parents who are interest citizens about issues relating to Manchester schools and encourages citizen participation in school improvement and on behalf of those citizens, I present you with the petition and there are many more to come.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Sysyn, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

There being no further business to come before the Special Meeting, on motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Wihby, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk